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THE COMFORTS OF RELIGION, AT SEASONS
WHEN THEY ARE MOST NEEDED.

A

DISCOURSE,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

MRS. ELIZABETH LATHROP,

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE,

28 JANUARY, 1809,

AGED 58.

DELIVERED THE SECOND LORD'S DAY AFTER HER

DECEASE, BY HER BEREAVED CONSORT,

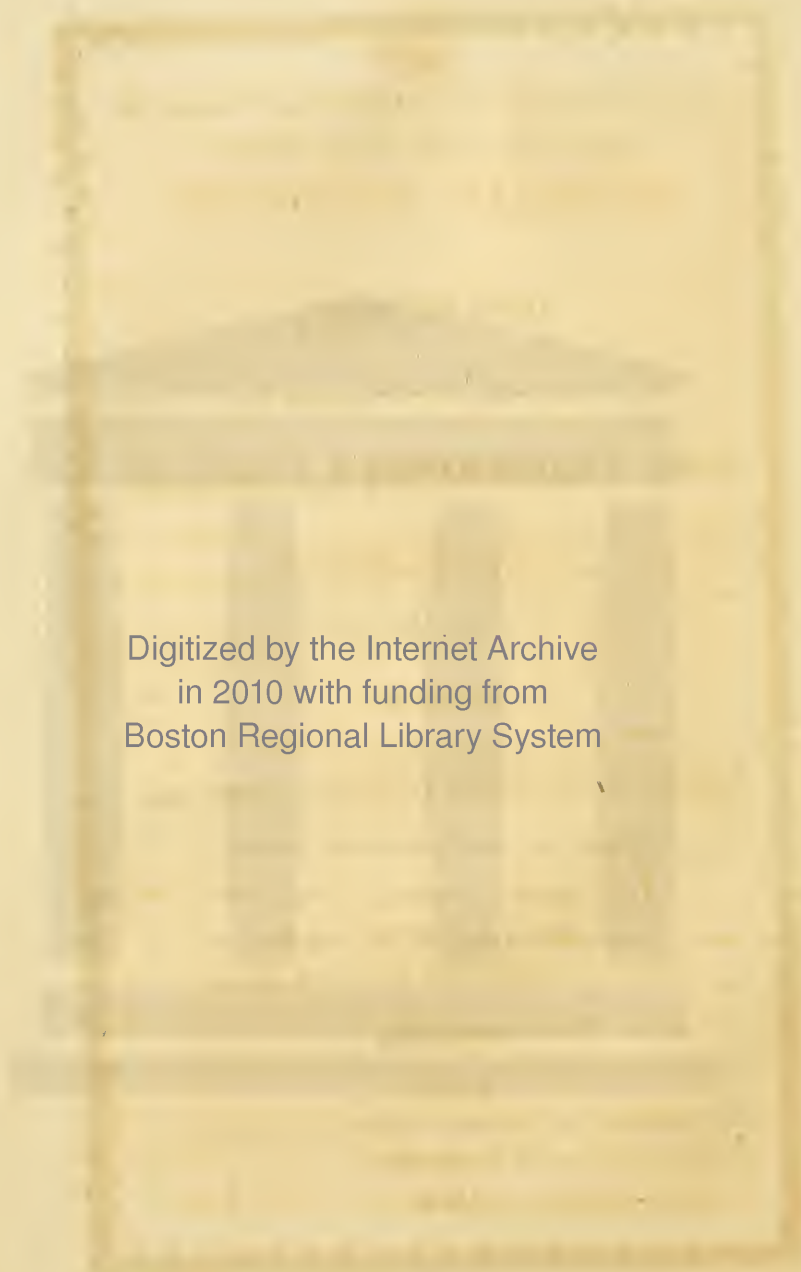
JOHN LATHROP, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN BOSTON.

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FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

2 CORINTHIANS i. 3, 4.

BLESSED BE GOD, EVEN THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST, THE FATHER OF MERCIES, AND THE GOD OF
ALL COMFORT ;

WHO COMFORTETH US IN ALL OUR TRIBULATIONS, THAT
WE MAY BE ABLE TO COMFORT THEM WHICH ARE IN
ANY TROUBLE, BY THE COMFORT WHEREWITH WE OUR-
SELVES ARE COMFORTED OF GOD.

IT is a peculiar excellency of the Christian Religion, that it affords comforts such as the world cannot give, and such as the world cannot take away. Such comforts we always need. The pleasures which the world is able to afford, can at no time satisfy the desires of an immortal mind. But such comforts we shall need more particularly when suffering the calamities of human life ; in days of sickness ; in seasons of mourning, and in the near views of death,



As we know from what we hear, and from what we see, that we are mortal, and that sorrows and mourning are appointed for us, we shall do well to make up our mind, and endeavour to be prepared for those events to which we are approaching, those changes which will certainly take place.

When we look forward to the days of tribulation which are coming upon us, we inquire with solicitude, where support may be had, where comfort may be found. The words on which we are now meditating respond to our anxious inquiries. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation." As he hath thus revealed himself to us, we may look to him, and pray that when he is correcting us, he would remember mercy, and give grace to help in every time of need.

It will be useful to place those comforts which come from God continually before us, that having a knowledge of them, and of the source whence they are derived, we may be able to apply them to our own condition and circumstances.

But before we enter farther on the subject, it may be proper to observe, that the comfort which we are anxious to possess, and without which we must be wretched in the days of sorrow which await us, are peculiar to religion. The man who has no religion cannot expect them. They come from God, but they come in the exercise of faith. The unbeliever hath no right to them. If the unbeliever expects comfort in



seasons of affliction, he must go to his philosophy, falsely so called ; he must go to the proud apostles of reason, and request them to comfort him. Poor comforters will he find them ! To believers, to christians, to the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, this discourse is addressed. Characters of this sort, while in a pilgrimage state, and under a course of discipline, are often in affliction, and in need of comfort. To whom then shall we be directed for strength, when we are made weak, and for comfort, when we are in sorrow, but to God ?

It may be said, God comforteth us, when he enables us to receive comfort from the revelation which he hath been pleased to give of the perfections of his nature, in the work of creation, and in the government of the world.

Speaking of the heathen nations, St. Paul says, “ That which may be known of God, is manifest in them ; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” But while the heathen nations had demonstration of the eternal power and Godhead, by the things which are made, they were not influenced by the knowledge which they had, to glorify God and submit to him as their rightful sovereign. They were not in a temper of mind to receive comfort in tribulation, “ for their foolish heart was darkened.” They either



banished from their minds the finest feelings of nature, and endeavoured to make themselves insensible of all pain, or they gave themselves up to immoderate, and even frantick sorrow. But let the christian look to the God who created and rules the world, and he will love Him ; he will fear to offend Him, and he will endeavour to please Him. The christian will rejoice that a being of infinite power, of infinite wisdom, and of infinite goodness, sitteth on the throne of the universe, and directeth all the movements of it in the most perfect manner. The infinite power of God, which makes the sinner tremble, will be contemplated by the christian with delight. That power, which no creature can withstand, is the christian's defence. Do thunders roll on high ? the christian is not terrified ; he knows the lightning and the tempest are directed and governed by the hand of his Father in heaven. Do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? Do kings set up themselves, and rulers take council for mischief ? the christian will not be afraid : he knows that bounds are set, over which the proud usurper cannot pass. " He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision."

In such ways as we have now mentioned, do humble christians receive comfort, while they meditate on those perfections of the Divine Being, which the workers of iniquity either disregard, or contemplate with dread. But if the workers of iniquity feel uncomfortable when they meditate on



that infinite power, against which they can make no defence, and on that infinite knowledge, from which their crimes cannot be hidden, what will their feelings be when they meditate on the perfect holiness, and the inflexible justice of the Almighty ? But these perfections of God, against which the thoughts of the wicked are particularly directed, are adored and loved by the christian. The christian finds comfort in the contemplation of them. The holiness of God, he knows, is benevolent holiness : It is opposed to moral evil, and to every thing connected with it. A God infinitely holy will therefore put an end to sin, and He will finally establish righteousness in his vast dominions. When the christian considers, that sin and death have reigned from the beginning of the world to the present day, he will rejoice and feel comforted in the belief that the time is coming, when sin shall be done away, and death shall reign no more. The christian contemplates that calm and peaceful state with great delight. How different from the state of things to which he has been accustomed ! In this world the christian beholds sin and death reigning with terror and dismay ; but in the world to come, in the state to which his faith carries him, a state of things which he believes the holiness and the power of God will bring to pass, there will be nothing to offend. No sin, no sorrow, no tears of grief. Joy and peace and happiness shall reign forever. When the christian has his mind fixed on the world to come and the blessedness of the righteous, he be-



comes almost impatient, and sighs for deliverance. While his faith is in lively exercise, he congratulates those who have finished their labours, and have entered into rest. These, my christian friends, are comforts which come from God ; and these comforts we shall possess, when we are enabled to meditate, in some good measure as we ought, on the perfections and government of our Father in heaven.

God comforteth us, when we are enabled to receive comfort from the revelation which He hath been pleased to give of his mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Father of mercies. When Jesus appeared as the special messenger of God, the Father made a clear revelation of that mercy which had been prepared for mankind, from the foundation of the world. This mercy had indeed been long promised to the fathers of the Hebrew nation, and the manifestation of it had been expected by those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel. The revelation of this mercy gave comfort and joy of the purest kind to the Mother, and the relatives of Jesus, to whom his heavenly descent was made known. The song of *Mary* and the benediction of *Simeon* express their piety and holy gratitude in language which will be always admired. “ And Mary
“ said, my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath
“ rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low
“ estate of his handmaid : for behold from henceforth all
“ generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty
“ hath done to me great things, and holy is his name.”



When *Joseph* and *Mary* brought the child *Jesus* to the Temple, “to present him to the Lord,” *Simeon* “took him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation : which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.” But there was nothing in the advent of Christ to give joy to good *Simeon*, which is not a reason for like joy to all who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. This is the foundation of all our comfort, all our hope and joy, as christians. Doubt and uncertainty with respect to the person and divine mission of Jesus, would render all the hopes and prospects of a future happy life, which the gospel sets before us, doubtful. But the christian who believes the record which the holy Evangelists have given of the birth of Christ, and of the mighty works which he performed, will not only have comfort in the belief that this Jesus is the Saviour of the world ; he will entertain a joyful hope that all things will be accomplished which the prophets foretold, and which the Apostles spake concerning the kingdom and glory of the Messiah.

Isaiah had a vision of the glory of Christ, when he said, “Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end.”

St. Paul had his mind on the same glory of the Redeemer when he said, “He must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Jesus himself declared, “God so loved the



“ world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever
 “ believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting
 “ life.” What words can be more comforting ! They are
 the words of the Son of God ; the words of him whom the
 Father sent to accomplish our redemption. How well they
 agree with the text which we are considering ! The Apostle
 declares, “ The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is “ The
 “ Father of mercies.” Jesus declares, his “ Father so loved
 “ the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso-
 “ ever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlast-
 “ ing life.”

Do you then believe ? If you have any right to the name
 of a christian, you do believe ; and, if you believe with affec-
 tion of heart ; if you have such confidence in Jesus, as to
 commit yourself to him, humbly depending on his merit, and
 resolving to obey him, you have his word for your security,
 that you shall not perish : you shall have everlasting life.
 What can you have to comfort you, if this assurance, given
 by Jesus himself, will not comfort you ?

In another place, Jesus declared, the Father had “ given
 “ him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to
 “ as many as” the Father had given him. There is certainly
 no question, but the Son of God hath *power* to give eternal
 life unto all who believe on him. The sincere believer there-
 fore has the most solid ground of comfort that can be given
 to a dependant and guilty creature.



This is a ground of comfort to the believer at all times and under all the circumstances of his life ; but he will feel the worth and importance of it more particularly in seasons of affliction, and when he finds that he is drawing near to death. At that serious hour, to which we are all approaching, faith in the Redeemer, faith in the promise of that eternal life, which Jesus will bestow on all who sincerely believe on him, will be to us of infinite consequence.

To the first part of the discourse, we add only one more particular, and say, God comforteth us when we are enabled to look forward with calmness and hope to the second appearing of the Lord, and the resurrection of the dead.

Such are the descriptions which are given of that most important day, that the stoutest hearts have been made to tremble. “ The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven
 “ with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance
 “ on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel
 “ of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with
 “ everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and
 “ from the glory of his power. When he shall come to be
 “ glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that
 “ believe.”

Is it possible, methinks I hear you inquire, is it possible that any of the children of men can be calm and composed in their minds with a scene so tremendous before them ? Can it be possible for any to find comfort, when they shall hear the trump of God ; when they shall behold the dead coming



forth from their graves, and the world in flames ? Yes ; the humble and obedient subjects of Jesus Christ, who have hope in death, will have hope also when Christ shall raise the dead. To the sincere believer, Christ is now precious, he will be always precious. When he comes in glory to judge the world, the humble christian will behold him as a friend ; and meet him with gratitude and joy.

That Apostle who hath given the most particular description of the second coming of the Lord, hath assured the friends of the Redeemer, they shall be safe. “ For the Lord himself “ shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of “ the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in “ Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive (or those “ who shall then be alive) and remain, shall be caught up to- “ gether with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, “ and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

This is the closing scene, the end of the world, when this globe on which we live, and which was once destroyed by an universal deluge, shall be destroyed by fire, in which the incorrigibly wicked shall perish ; but the friends of God and of his Son, even an innumerable multitude, such as no man can number, shall be admitted to mansions of eternal peace, where they shall be happy, completely happy forever.

In the lively exercise of faith, the christian may look forward with calmness and hope, to this appearing of the Lord, when the dead shall be raised, and the world which we now inhabit shall be destroyed. To have comfort at that day must



be an unspeakable favour ; and if the religion of Christ can give this much needed comfort, surely we shall embrace it with gratitude, and pray we may be influenced by its doctrines, and guided by the light which it affords, until our faith shall be lost in the vision, and our hope in the possession of heavenly blessedness.

Having attended to some of those comforts which the Father of mercies is pleased to grant unto those who humbly look to him, and request his gracious supports, we now proceed to the

Second part of the discourse, which is to point out the seasons, and conditions of life, in which the comforts of Religion are most needed. Having done this, we shall endeavour to apply the subject, and bring the important considerations, suggested by it home to our own bosoms.

And may the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enable us to receive those comforts in the days of our tribulation, which his holy word assures us, He is willing to give.

The seasons in which we shall feel a peculiar want of the comforts of Religion, are the seasons of affliction which we all expect.

We all expect affliction, because the sentence of death was long ago passed against the race of man, and those means are constantly in operation, which have carried off all the preceding generations, and will as certainly sweep away all who now inhabit this globe.

While sin and death remain in force, the world in which we live will be a world of tribulation.



We suffer in our individual capacity ; we suffer pains and sickness, the infirmities of nature, and the decays of age ; and we must suffer the dissolution of this mortal body.

We suffer with our connexions, when we see them suffering ; but under no circumstances, and in no seasons do we suffer deeper affliction and sorrow, than at the moment when the providence of God makes a separation between *us* and *those* whom we most tenderly love.

The seasons in which we shall feel a peculiar want of the comforts which God only can give, need no very particular description ; they readily occur to us. We shall however enumerate some of them.

We shall feel a peculiar want of the comforts which God only can give, when we shall be visited with sickness ; and more especially when the sickness puts on the appearance of danger, and we are called to look into eternity.

Many of the children of men live, as if this world were really their home, and they had no expectation of leaving it. All the provision which they make, is provision for the flesh. All the care they exercise is to acquire the power, and means of extending their pleasures. Or, if they ever think of dying, they think the preparation which they may be able to make in a sick chamber, and when no longer able to enjoy the things of the world, will be sufficient. But let me warn such persons of their danger. Be not deceived. If you have no disposition to prepare for another world, while you are in health, you can have no assurance that you will have a dispo-



sition more favourable to such exercises, when you are sick. And farther let me tell you, it is highly probable your infirmities may weaken the powers of your mind : Your pains may be sufficient to occupy all your attention ; you will therefore be poorly able to make the preparation which you may wish to make for a future state. But as this discourse is chiefly addressed to those who have given some serious attention to the great things of Religion, I would call upon persons of this description to meditate on the days of sickness, which they are to expect, and the comforts which they will need, when the world cannot comfort them.

If God has smiled on your industry, and crowned your honest labours with success, so that you have all the means of temporal comfort about you, which the world can afford, you will be thankful for them ; but on a sick bed, and in the near views of death, you will feel the need of spiritual consolations. You will pray for comforts which no earthly friend can give you,---the comforts of Religion ; comforts which flow from the fountain of life ; from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In a season of the kind we are now considering, when some fatal disease shall have taken hold on us, and we shall feel our strength decaying, a good hope of pardon through the mercy of God, attended with the testimony of our conscience, that we have endeavoured to do our duty, will afford us more comfort than the treasures of the Indies. When we see the christian dying in peace ; leaving the world without regret, in humble expectation of admission to the presence of the



Lord, and to the society of angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, we exclaim in the words of a prophet, “ Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his !”

But should God spare us in a world of disease and death ; should He continue us in health, even to old age ; old age will certainly bring its infirmities. The human frame must, and it will decay. When we shall find some of the essential parts of this curious machine are no longer able to perform their office, and the desire of life is failing us, how much shall we need the comforts of Religion ? How wretched shall we be without them ?

Words cannot describe the gloomy condition of a man bending to the earth, under a burden of infirmities, and the weight of old age, but destitute of those comforts which flow from the love of God. He has out-lived the acquaintance of his youth, and the companions of his better days : He has little or nothing to attach him to the world, and yet, having no solid ground of hope, no joyful expectation of a better life, he still wishes to live. How different the views and the feelings of the humble christian, who has grown old in the service of his master ; who knows in whom he has believed, and is persuaded that nothing shall separate him from the divine favour. When he finds his heart and his flesh are failing him, with composure and hope he will say, “ Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear. My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in



“ the place of the dead : Thou wilt shew me the path of life.

“ In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are
“ pleasures for ever more.”

In the days of tribulation, which are approaching, when sickness shall have seized on us, and we shall perceive the shades of death are spreading around us, we shall need comforts, such as God only can give. And blessed be his name for the hope we have, that if we humbly endeavour to serve him, He, who is the father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, will comfort us in all our tribulations.

But we not only suffer in our individual capacity ; we suffer also with our connexions, when we see them suffering.

Such are the tender feelings, which the Author of our existence hath planted in our souls, that we cannot see any of our fellow creatures, and particularly such as are connected with us by the ties of friendship and relation, in suffering circumstances, and not suffer with them. But who can describe the sufferings we feel, when the providence of God makes a separation between *us*, and *those* whom we most highly esteem, and with whom we have lived in the purest affection !

I need not inform you, my thoughts were directed to the words of St. Paul, on which we have this day been meditating, by the affliction which God hath been pleased to bring on me and my family. I need not inform you, the wound is deep and painful. The stroke which hath brought us low, without divine support, would be too heavy for us to bear. But He, who wounds, can heal. He bindeth up the broken in heart.



“ He is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,
“ who comforteth us in all our tribulation.”

I desire to be thankful for all the support, which the Father of mercies hath been pleased to afford to me and my children. While I mourn the loss of an amiable companion, the partner of all my joys, my counsellor when in perplexities, and consoler when in afflictions ; and when my children mourn the loss of a mother, whose care from their infancy was to do them good ; who was able to advise and instruct them, and who ceased not to pray for them ; while we mourn the loss of one so dear to us, whose presence seemed necessary to our happiness, whose countenance was cheerfulness, and whose conversation never failed to give us delight, while we mourn the loss of one so deservedly high in our affection and esteem, we desire to be thankful, “ that we sorrow not even as others “ which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died “ and rose again, even so them also, which sleep in Jesus, “ will God bring with him.”

You are sensible it would be improper for me to delineate, very particularly, the character of my late amiable partner ; my feelings are too deeply interested. A few sentences in a letter, received since her decease from a worthy friend and brother, I take liberty to lay before you ; for while to myself, and to my family, they are consoling, to you all, I doubt not, they will be acceptable. He thus writes,



“ Your loss is indeed great. You have lost an amiable
“ consort, ~~one~~ with whom you have lived many years,
“ and with whom you have enjoyed much happiness and
“ comfort. She was possessed with that sprightliness of im-
“ agination, that amiable sociability, and those engaging
“ manners, which very much endeared her to the circle of
“ her numerous friends. But what crowned her character
“ above every thing else, was this ; she was a sincere and
“ steadfast believer in christianity, had respect for all its in-
“ stitutions, partook of its comforts and consolations, and is
“ now gone, I trust, to reap its rewards. Take courage
“ then, my brother ; bear up with a manly and christian
“ fortitude, in the days of your sorrow and mourning, and
“ exhibit yourself as a pattern of resignation to all around
“ you.

“ Your children have also sustained a very great loss.
“ May the Father of mercies support them, and grant them
“ the consolations of his spirit, which are not small.

“ My dear wife and children are overwhelmed in tears,
“ and my house is this day turned into a house of sorrow
“ and mourning.”

Under a weight of affliction, which has fallen so heavily
upon us, and which has brought tears from so many eyes,
we need comforts such as God only can give ; such as he
holds out to us in his word, and in those gracious promises,
on which we are taught to rely.



Let us now endeavour to apply the subject, and bring the important considerations suggested by it, home to our own condition and circumstances.

While I have been seeking comfort for myself, I have been seeking comfort for you also ; and if I have found comfort, I would lay it before you, that you also may be comforted “in all your tribulation, by the comfort wherewith we “ourselves are comforted of God.”

While I pray for your peace and prosperity, that the candle of the Lord may shine on your tabernacle, that health and long life may be granted to you, you know as well as I, the days of darkness will come upon you ; death will enter your windows, and those whom you most tenderly love will be taken from you, or you will be taken from them ; for it is appointed that man should die ; it is the decree of God, and it must be executed.

There are therefore seasons of affliction before you, which you cannot escape. You may have been called to part with many of your friends, and you may yet have many to part with. But whether you still have connexions who are dear to you, or, having been deprived of them by the hand of God, you feel lonely on the earth, you have at least one season of trial before you ; one hour of tribulation in which you will need comfort, I mean the season of your own last sickness, and the hour of your death.

Permit me to approach you, whatever your affliction may be, and present to your troubled minds the comforts of Religion.



Are you sick and full of pain ? You will remember it is the hand of God which hath touched you ; you will therefore be patient in your affliction : It is your Heavenly Father who is correcting you, and he is the Father of mercies ; you will therefore submit with calmness. While you say unto the Most High, “ Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear “ unto my cry, hold not thy peace at my tears, for I am a “ stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were ; “ O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, “ and be no more” ;---while you make this prayer, and your pious friends at your bedside make intercession for you, you will say, as taught by your great Master, “ Father, not my “ will, but thine be done.”

Are you sensible the time of your departure is at hand ? At that serious hour you will need support, you will want a comforter. Look unto God, and call to mind his infinite compassion. Call to mind the declaration of Jesus, that the Father sent him into the world, “ that whosoever believeth “ on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” If you believe on him, if you commit your soul to him, you will have comfort in death, you have the promise of him who is the resurrection and the life, you have the promise of him who never deceived, and of him who never will deceive, that you shall not perish, you shall be saved, and he will raise you up at the last day.

A more sure ground of comfort we cannot have, and this comfort we may have in the most trying season which is



before us, this comfort we may have, if we now believe on the Son of God, and humbly obey him.

Are you called to the chamber of your dying friend, and the most precious you have on earth ? This indeed is a season of affliction ! You will want comfort, which the Father of mercies, and he only, can give you.

It is a comfort, that we may commend our dying friend to God. Not that God needs to be informed of our wants, or to be moved with our prayers. But believing in his goodness and mercy, it will be a comfort that we may come as children to a Father, and pray that the soul of our friend, when it shall leave the body, no longer fit for its abode, may be convoyed to realms of bliss, and be made happy forever.

Have you been lately bereaved ? Has the messenger of death entered your dwelling, and taken from you some valuable member of your family ? Is your house, which for years past had been the abode of cheerfulness and of praise, now a house of sadness ? In your sorrows you will say to those around you, " Comfort me, comfort me, for the hand of " the Lord hath touched me." May God be your comforter ! " He comforteth us in all our tribulations."

Has God called for one of your children ? You will remember, He has only called for that which was his own. He hath taken what he gave. You will call to your mind the love which Jesus expressed for children when he took them to his arms and blessed them, and declared that of such is the



kingdom of Heaven. His love is now the same, and whom He loves He will make happy. Your children, whom God hath taken from you, are taken from a world of trouble, of temptation, of sin and death ; and as you have reason to believe Jesus, who loved children, hath received their unoffending souls to the abodes of the blessed, you cannot wish them out of Heaven, that you may be comforted with their presence.

Have you lately been made a widow ; and in addition to the pain which you feel for the loss of a tender husband, have you children, who are now fatherless ? May the Lord be merciful to you and comfort you. He speaks to you the words of comfort. “ Leave thy fatherless children, (saith the “ Lord) I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust “ in me.”---“ A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the “ widow, is God in his holy habitation.”---If you have faith in God, you may go to him in your affliction, and you may plead the promises of his word, for your comfort and support.

Or on the other hand, has the husband been spared and the wife taken away ? Has the father been continued to the children, and the mother been removed from them ?

Have you been bereaved of the wife of your youth ? Has the desire of your eyes been taken from you ?---And your children left, without the protection, the indulgent care, the instruction and the example of the parent who was most with them, and whose attentions were of the highest conse-



quence to their happiness? In such a season of affliction, I know you need the comforts of God. And be assured, if you confide in his mercy and goodness He will not leave you comfortless. He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And again we are assured, "that all things shall work together for good to them that love God."---If you can plead this promise, you will find comfort under your greatest afflictions.

It is but for a short space that you will be separated from those whom you loved, and if your short separation shall be the means of purifying your souls, you will be the better prepared for the joys of the heavenly state, where kindred spirits will meet, and never part.

Is the body of your nearest friend now laid in the silent tomb, with the bodies of parents and kindred who have been long buried? Such are the associations of ideas in our mind, that we cannot meditate on this condition of the body of one whom we loved, without increasing our sorrow. And here again we call in the aids of Religion to comfort us.

Jesus died and was buried. Jesus arose from the dead, and secured the resurrection of all who have died in the Lord. He is the resurrection and the life, and all who sleep in him he will awake to everlasting life and happiness.

In the mean time, it may be well for us to consider, the bodies of our friends, which are now at rest, are no more than *images of clay*, insensible as the earth which covers them.



Those bodies were once the tabernacles of the souls which dwelt in them ; but, broken down with disease, or worn out with age, they become unfit for the dwelling of the immortal mind ; they are now returning to their first principles, to the earth from whence they came. But the power of God, which is able to subdue all things, and bring them to answer his own purposes, will produce new and spiritual bodies, infinitely more perfect and beautiful than the bodies of flesh which are laid in the tomb. “ For this corruptible must put on
 “ incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So
 “ when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this
 “ mortal shall put on immortality, then shall be brought to
 “ pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in
 “ victory. O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is
 “ thy victory ? The strength of death is sin, and the strength
 “ of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, who giveth us the
 “ victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

My christian friends, I have this day endeavoured to bring to your view, some of the considerations which are suggested by our text, and some of the gracious promises which God hath given for our support, in the days of affliction.

If I have found any consolations, any comforts of spirit in the days of sorrow which have been appointed for me, it was in such considerations and such promises as I have now endeavoured to set before you. I wish you to lay up these things in your hearts ; keep them before you, that in the days



of affliction which you must expect, you may apply them and find comfort in them. Meditate daily on the perfections of God, on his power and wisdom and goodness, on the perfect rectitude of his government, on his holiness and mercy. Read his word ; meditate on the Gospel, and the accomplishment of the great work on which Jesus came into the world. Bring your thoughts, your desires, your pursuits under subjection to the law and will of God, and you will have nothing to fear. Nothing can harm you, if ye be thus “ followers of “ that which is good.” “ Neither death nor life, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, “ shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is “ in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Next to the consolations which come from God, in seasons of tribulation, are the consolations which we find in the sympathies and kind attentions of christian friends. Such alleviations of sorrow, as the attentions and sympathies of the best of friends can give, I have received ; and for all the kindnesses which have been showed to me and to mine, both to the living and to the dead, it is meet that I give thanks.

Let me request my christian friends, that they will not cease to make supplication for me ; that I may not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when rebuked of him ; that when old and gray-headed, God will not forsake me ; that the fragment of time which may yet be allowed me, the remnant of my days, may be more usefully employed than the many



years which have passed away ; and that when it shall please God to call me to the valley of death, I may fear no evil ; that I may then experience the comforts of that Religion which I would most sincerely and most earnestly recommend to all who hear me ; that I may have that hope which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus ; and that in the great day, when I shall be called to give an account of the ministry which I have received of the Lord, I may do it with joy, and be able to say, “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my “ course, I have kept the faith ;”....here am I....and here, here are the spiritual children which thou hast graciously given me : And finally, that I may unite with you, who are now the people of my charge, with our virtuous friends who have been taken from us, and with an innumerable multitude, ransomed from sin and death, in most grateful praises to the Father of our Lord, who loved us when we were enemies, and to Jesus who suffered for our redemption ; to whom be glory in the church, on earth, and the church in heaven, throughout all ages,

AMEN.

